

Basic Briefing On Virginia Indians



For Legislators, Government Officials,
and Staff

Office of the Secretary of Natural Resources

Basic Briefing on Virginia Indians
First Edition, December 2013

Introduction

From time to time, the General Assembly and the various State Agencies consider legislation or conduct business involving Virginia Indians. The purpose of this briefing is to provide Legislators, Government Officials, and their staff an overview on State recognized Virginia Indian Tribes and Virginia Indian communities.

The history and identity of the native peoples of Virginia and the surrounding states is both complex and somewhat fluid. Through a combination of historic records and archaeological studies, it is possible to see the patterns of movement and change, but it is far more difficult to trace a consistent thread of identity that will link people (and groups) living today with specific tribes in the past.

This overview is not intended to be a final word on any of the questions about specific claims of Indian tribal or ethnic identity (and the two are not the same), but simply to put those discussions in a broad context.

Basic Facts about Indians in Virginia Today

State Recognition: Currently there are eleven state recognized tribes. The Pamunkey and Mattaponi tribes have been effectively recognized continuously over the centuries by virtue of retaining their reservations and annual tribute to the Governor. From 1983 through 2010, recognition has been granted by the Virginia General Assembly through passage of Joint Resolutions.

Federal Recognition: Currently there are no federally recognized Indian tribes in Virginia. Several tribes are pursuing federal recognition through the Department of the Interior or through Congressional action. Many additional people shown as Indian in the U.S. Census records are members of tribes in other states that are recognized by the federal government (such as Cherokee or Muskogee) or tribes recognized by other states (such as Saponi or Piscataway).

Government-to-Government Relationship: The eleven state recognized tribes in Virginia have a direct government-to-government relationship with the Governor (or his/her designee). As state recognized tribes, the Commonwealth includes their stories in the Virginia Department of Education's Standards of Learning as part of cultural and historic displays throughout the state. In addition, among other activities, the state consults and facilitates communication with the tribes on federal and state matters that affect their culture and communities.

State Funding: Virginia state recognized tribes do not receive special state funding. Two tribes operate fish hatcheries under contracts with the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

Hunting and Fishing Rights: Virginia still honors hunting and fishing rights granted to the tribes in the colonial treaties allowing members of the recognized tribes to fish without permits in Virginia's waters.

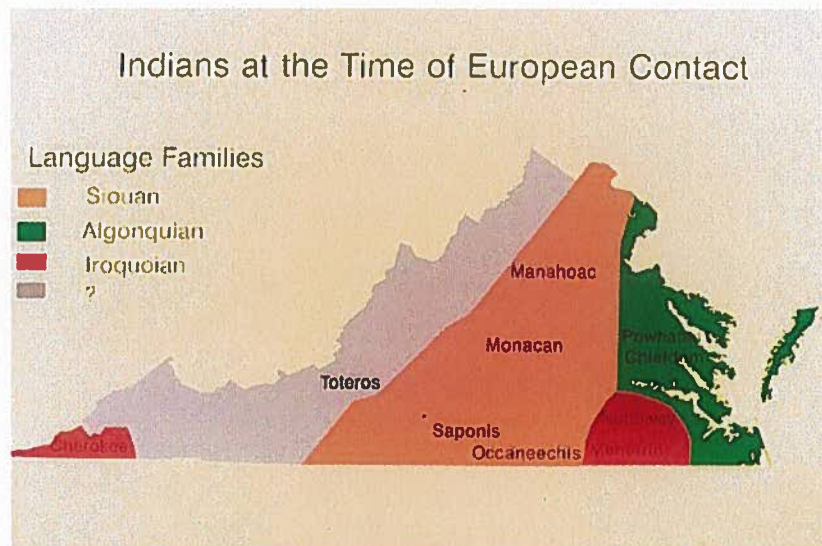
Reservations: Two tribes, the Pamunkey Indian Tribe and the Mattaponi Indian Tribe, have reserved historic lands held in trust by the Commonwealth. By the mid-to-late 19th century the other tribes had lost the lands once reserved to their use, but many have now purchased lands and buildings used as community centers for the benefit of their communities.

Historical Background

The land we call Virginia has been home to Indian people and their ancestors for many thousands of years. Artifacts dating to as early as 22,000 years ago have been found in what would have been dry land miles off the coast of Virginia's modern shoreline. Archaeological sites dating as early as the Cactus Hill Site in Sussex County (16,000 years ago), the Thunderbird Site in Warren County (9,000 years ago), and thousands of sites throughout the Commonwealth show a long and complex history of peoples and cultures moving and changing over the millennia.

While the Spanish first encountered Virginia Indians in the mid 1500s, when the English settlers came to stay in 1607, there were an estimated 50,000 people already living, hunting, fishing, and farming their fields from the Eastern shore into the Appalachian Mountain and Valley region. These people represented three very different language families—Algonquian, Siouan, and Iroquoian. The major linguistic groups were sometimes trading partners and sometimes deadly enemies. Conflict and warfare occurred within the linguistically related groups as well.

The coastal areas were primarily inhabited by Algonquian speaking tribes. As many as 30 of these were allied with and under the leadership of Paramount Chief Powhatan to a greater or lesser degree.



The Siouan groups living throughout the Piedmont region derive from the Ohio area. Traces of this connection can be seen in both their linguistic affiliation and their culture—particularly the use of building burial mounds (Monacan, Manahoac, Saponi, Occaneechi, and possibly the

Totero/Tutelo). Their range (or that of other Siouan peoples) likely extended into the Mountain and Valley regions as well.

Iroquoian speaking groups could be found along the fall line and south western coastal plains (Nottoway and Meherrin) and the far southwest mountains (Cherokee).

The intervening history between 1607 and the present is complex to say the least. Periods of warfare and peace between the Powhatan-related Algonquian tribes and the English ended in 1646 with a treaty that pushed all Indians either north of the York or west of the Blackwater Rivers. That did not stop the conflict as the influx of settlers swelled over the years. In 1658 the Colonial governor and council decreed specific reduced territories to various tribes. The Pamunkey and Mattaponi trace their current reservations to this document. Following attacks against even allied tribes during Bacon's Rebellion, the Treaty of Middle Plantation in 1677 further exerted colonial government control over Indian activities while promising to protect Indian territories. None of this was happening in a vacuum. Iroquois from the north raided English settlers and Virginia Indian tribes alike throughout the late 17th and 18th centuries. Later treaties from 1679 through 1777, dealt primarily with incursions of Iroquois and Shawnee and limiting settlement of the Cherokee in southwestern Virginia.

For over 400 years Virginia Indians have experienced population loss through European diseases and warfare both with the colonists and among themselves, annihilation or movement of tribes from their original territories, and the devastating effects of "paper genocide" when Indians were reclassified as "colored" and not allowed to register births, marriages, or other activities as "Indian." Yet, today, the U.S. Census records over 40,000 people living in Virginia who identify themselves as "Indian" and the Commonwealth of Virginia formally recognizes eleven tribes with over 5,000 members.

Recognized Virginia Indian Tribes

Cheroenhaka (Nottoway) Tribe

Location: Southampton County

Chief: Walt Brown

Contact Information: Post Office Box 397

Courtland, Virginia 23837

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The Cheroenhaka (Nottoway) Tribe, numbering roughly 378 members, is centered in Southampton County near Courtland. According to the tribe, they have always called themselves “Cheroenhaka” rather than the term “Nottoway” which is derived from an Algonquian epithet. Because the historical records use the term “Nottoway” exclusively and because the same historical records apply as well to the Nottoway Indian Tribe of Virginia, this summary retains the term that is in general use.

The Iroquoian speaking Nottoway lived along the fall line and the southwestern coastal plain. English merchant Edward Bland describes visiting Nottoway settlements of Chounteroute Town and Tonnatorah near the Rowantee Branch and Stony Creek tributaries of the Nottoway River in 1650. A Nottoway Chief is among the signatories of the 1677 Treaty of Middle Plantation. As the colony expanded, the Nottoway migrated in stages down the Nottoway River ending up near present-day Courtland and Sebrell in Southampton County where, in 1705, the House of Burgesses established an approximately 40,000 acre reservation. Between 1820 and 1878, parcels of Nottoway reservation land were given to individual tribal descendants.

In 2002, the Cheroenhaka (Nottoway) Indian Tribe reorganized, bringing together individuals and family clusters who identified themselves as Nottoway descendants, and established a tribal government with Chief Walt Brown as its first modern day Chief. In 2009 the tribe purchased 100 acres of former reservation land to build a replica 18th century palisaded village (Cattashowrock Town), as described by William Byrd in 1728.

Chickahominy Tribe

Location: Providence Forge

Chief: Steve Adkins

Contact Information: 8200 Lott Cary Road

Providence Forge, Virginia 23140

Wayne.adkins@att.net

The Chickahominy Tribe is located half-way between Richmond and Williamsburg in Charles City County, Virginia, near where the tribe lived in 1600. There are approximately 875 Chickahominy people living within a five-mile radius of the Samaria Church and tribal center, with hundreds more living in other parts of the U.S.

When Jamestown was founded, the tribe lived in several villages along the Chickahominy River, from the mouth of the river near Jamestown to the middle of the current county of New Kent. Because of their proximity to Jamestown, the Chickahominy people had early contact with the English settlers, helping them to survive during their first few winters here by trading food for other items. As the settlers began to prosper and expand their settlements, the Chickahominy were crowded out of their homeland. In the Treaty of 1646, the tribe was granted reservation land in the Pamunkey Neck area of Virginia, near where the Mattaponi Reservation now exists in King William County. Eventually, the tribe lost its reservation land and Chickahominy families began a gradual migration to the area called the Chickahominy Ridge, where they now reside.

Reorganized in the early 20th century, today the tribe is led by a tribal council of twelve men and women, including a chief and two assistant chiefs, all elected by vote of the members of the tribe. The Chickahominy Tribe is also one of the six Virginia tribes seeking federal recognition through Congressional action.

Eastern Chickahominy Tribe

Location: Providence Forge

Chief: Gene Adkins

Contact Information: 3120 Mount Pleasant Road

Providence Forge, Virginia 23140

pathlane@cox.net

The Chickahominy Tribe Eastern Division is located 25 miles east of Richmond in New Kent County. European contact with the tribal ancestry of the modern-day Chickahominy Indians and the Chickahominy Tribe Eastern Division is recorded as early as 1607. The two tribes shared a history until 1920-1921 when the Eastern Chickahominy formally organized themselves as a separate tribe with E.P. Bradby as the first chief. The “new” tribe was incorporated in 1925.

By 1820, families with present-day Chickahominy surnames had begun to settle in Charles City County. In 1870, a state census reported a group of Indians living in New Kent County; these are likely the ancestors of the present-day Eastern Chickahominy Indians. Chickahominy Indians in the Windsor Shades–Boulevard area of New Kent County established a school in 1910. In September 1922 the Tsena Commocko Indian Baptist Church was organized.

In 2002, the tribe purchased 41 acres of land and began construction of a tribal center in 2008. The tribe is also one of the six Virginia tribes seeking federal recognition through Congressional action.

Mattaponi Indian Tribe

Location: West Point

Chief: Mark Custalow

Contact Information: 1467 Mattaponi Reservation Circle

West Point, Virginia 23181

mcustalow@caservices.com

The members of the Mattaponi tribe live on a 150-acre reservation that stretches along the borders of the Mattaponi River in King William County. Although the Tribal Roll numbers 450 people, only 75 actually live on the reservation.

In 1646, the Mattaponi began paying tribute to the colonial governor of Virginia. This practice continues to the present day, when on the fourth Wednesday of November the tribe presents game or fish to the governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, along with members of the Pamunkey Tribe. The Mattaponi Indian Reservation was created in 1658 by an act of the Virginia General Assembly from land long held by the tribe. The tribe traces its history back to the paramount chief Powhatan, father of Pocahontas, who ruled most of Tidewater Virginia when the Europeans arrived in 1607. Over the centuries, the Mattaponi Tribe has maintained its heritage and many of its customs despite strong pressures pushing toward assimilation with the mainstream culture.

Facilities on the reservation include living quarters, a small church, a museum, the fish hatchery and marine science facility, and a community tribal building that was formerly the reservation school.

Monacan Indian Nation

Location: Amherst County

Chief: Sharon Bryant

Contact Information:

Post Office Box 1136

Madison Heights, Virginia 24572

Mnation538@aol.com

The Monacan Indian Nation is composed of about 1,600 tribal members, located in Amherst County and recognized as a tribe by the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1989. Their community at Bear Mountain has been centered on a school, community church, and cemetery for generations.

Sometimes enemies and sometimes trading partners of the Algonquian tribes to the east, the Monacan Indians spoke a Siouan language and were more closely related to tribes in the Ohio River Valley as seen in both their language and the practice of building burial mounds. The Monacan are related to the Occaneechi and Saponi peoples now located in North Carolina, and they were affiliated with the Mannahoac, who occupied the northern Piedmont in Virginia.

Tribal members have begun a cultural education program, an elders program, and a tribal scholarship fund. They have obtained numerous grants to fund their projects and have restored their log cabin schoolhouse (circa 1870), which is now a registered National Historic Landmark. The Monacan Nation is also one of the six Virginia tribes seeking federal recognition through Congressional action.

Nansemond Tribe

Location: Chesapeake

Chief: Barry Bass

Contact Information: 3427 Galberry Road

Chesapeake, Virginia 23323

barrybass@cox.net

Currently, most Nansemond tribal members live in the Chesapeake/Suffolk area. The tribe numbered roughly 200 in 2009.

At the time of their first English contact in Virginia, the Nansemond Tribe lived in several villages along the Nansemond River centered near Chuckatuck, the current location of Suffolk. Their head chief lived near Dumpling Island, where the tribe's temples and sacred items were located. At that time, the tribe had a population of 1200 persons with 300 bowmen. As increasing numbers of Europeans moved into the Nansemond River area, some tribal members remained along the Nansemond side-by-side with the English; others relocated westward holding reservation lands along the Nottoway River until 1792. The history of this sub-group and the historical Nottoway during the 18th and 19th centuries are closely entwined.

The Nansemond tribe was state recognized in 1985 and is one of the six Virginia tribes seeking federal recognition through Congressional action. The members have operated a tribal museum and gift shop in Chuckatuck. In August of 2013, the City of Suffolk deeded to the Nansemond the site of one of their traditional towns, Mattanock Town. The tribe is planning both an interpretive and ceremonial/community center on the site.

Nottoway Tribe of Virginia

Location: Chesapeake

Chief: Lynette Allston

Contact Information: 25274 Barhams Hill Road

Dreweryville, Virginia 23844

allstonfam@aol.com

The Nottoway Tribe of Virginia consists of roughly 120 members living south of the James and based in the Capron area of Southampton County.

The Iroquoian speaking Nottoway lived along the fall line and the southwestern coastal plain. English merchant Edward Bland describes visiting Nottoway settlements of Chounteroute Town and Tonnatorah near Rowantee Branch / Creek and Stony Creek tributaries of the Nottoway River in 1650. A Nottoway Chief is among the signatories of the Treaty of Middle Plantation in 1677. As the colony expanded, the historical Nottoway migrated in stages down Nottoway River ending up near present-day Courtland and Sebrell in what is now Southampton County. In 1705, the House of Burgesses established a reservation of approximately 40,000 acres in two parcels near Courtland. Between 1820 and 1878, parcels of Nottoway reservation land were given to individual descendants of the historical Nottoway tribe. While they disappear from official records as a tribe, early 20th century anthropologists noted that Nottoway descendants were reported to be living in the Sebrell and Courtland area where these Nottoway descendants lived quietly and almost invisibly in a rural setting.

The Nottoway Indian Tribe of Virginia reorganized, incorporated and elected a Tribal Council in 2006. In 2012 the tribe formally opened the Nottoway Indian Tribe of Virginia Community House & Interpretive Center in Capron. It has also established the Virginia Nottoway Indian Circle and Square Foundation to preserve and perpetuate the ideas, culture, and traditions of the Nottoway Indian Tribe of Virginia.

Pamunkey Tribe

Location: King William County

Chief: Kevin Brown

Contact Information: 331 Pocket Road

Pamunkey Reservation

King William, Virginia 23086

kbdobro@aol.com

The Pamunkey Indian Reservation, on the Pamunkey River and adjacent to King William County, contains approximately 1,200 acres, 500 of which are wetlands with many creeks. Thirty-one families reside on the reservation and many tribal members live in nearby Richmond and Newport News, as well as throughout Virginia and the United States.

The chief of the Pamunkey, Opechancanough, succeeded Powhatan as paramount chief shortly after Powhatan's death. Successive Pamunkey chiefs continued to lead an ever more fragmented alliance through most of the 17th century. Signatory to several 17th century treaties, and holding reservation lands confirmed in 1658 by the Colonial Governor and Council the tribe has maintained its reservation, identity and own governing body, continuing to pay tribute the Governor over the centuries.

The Pamunkey Indian Museum was built in 1979. Three documentary videos have been produced as well to portray the ways of life and history of the people. A shad hatchery built in 1918 continues to operate and ensures that Pamunkey River shad runs have remained the healthiest of any of the East Coast rivers that are tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay. Revived as important economic venture in the 1930s, the tribe's longstanding tradition of pottery making continues today.

Patawomeck Tribe

Location: Stafford County

Chief: John Lightner

Contact Information:

1416 Brent Street

Fredericksburg, VA 22401

cowboy_john1@msn.com

The Patawomeck Tribe (also referred to as Patawomeke or Potomac), numbers around 500 members and is based in Stafford County along the Potomac River near their ancestral towns of Patawomeck, Paspatanzy and Indian Point.

An Algonquian-speaking tribe the Patawomeck were sometimes allied with the Powhatan tribes, and sometimes allied instead with the English. Powhatan's daughter Pocahontas was visiting a Patawomeck town when she was captured and taken hostage by the English. As tensions grew between the Patawomeck and the English, the Governor of the colony and Governor's Council ordered the tribe to be "utterly destroyed" in 1666 and the tribe disappeared from colonial records.

According to oral traditions, with the death of most men of the tribe, its women and children were either taken in by settler families, went into hiding, or were enslaved. In the early 20th century, anthropologists Frank Speck and William Gilbert mention reports of possible Indian descendants (whom they referred to as Potomac) in the Stafford County area. Oral history, as well as more recent research into family, church, land, and other records, maintains that several families native to the Patawomeck ancestral area trace their lineage to the tribe.

The Patawomeck Tribe have recreated an interactive 17th century living history village and established the Patawomeck Heritage Foundation to promote tribal educational activities. They are raising funds to build a Native American Cultural Center in the White Oak area.

Rappahannock Tribe

Location: Indian Neck

Chief: G. Anne Richardson

Contact Information:

5036 Indian Neck Road

Indian Neck, Virginia 23148

ChiefAnneRich@AOL.com

The Rappahannock Tribe has roughly 500 enrolled members living primarily in Essex, Caroline, and King and Queen Counties.

In 1608 John Smith mapped 14 Rappahannock villages along the river that bears their name, but from 1640 through the 1660s English encroachment increasingly reduced their territory. After Bacon's Rebellion, the Rappahannock consolidated into one village and in November 1682 the Virginia Council laid out 3,474 acres for the Rappahannock in Indian Neck. Only a year later, the Virginia colony forcibly removed the Tribe from their homes and relocated them to Portobago Indian Town to use as a human shield to protect white Virginians from the New York Iroquois who continued to attack the Virginia frontier and threaten the expansion of English settlement. In 1705, the Nanzatico Indians, who lived across the Rappahannock River from Portobago Indian Town, were sold into slavery in Antigua. Once again, driven from their homes, the Essex County militia removed the Rappahannocks from Portabago Indian town and the land there was patented by English settlers. The Rappahannocks returned to their ancestral homelands downriver, where they continue to live today.

The Rappahannock Tribe formally incorporated in 1921. In 1996, the Rappahannock joined five other tribes seeking federal recognition through Congressional action. In 1998, the Rappahannock Tribe elected the first woman chief, G. Anne Richardson, to lead a Virginia tribe since the 1700s. Also in 1998, the tribe purchased 119 acres and established a land trust on which to build their housing development. They built and sold their first home in 2001.

Upper Mattaponi

Location: King William County

Chief: Kenneth Adams

Contact Information:

237 Mona Drive

Newport News, Virginia 23608

Kenfadams787@gmail.com

Centered around the Indian View Baptist Church (1942) and the former Sharon Indian School (1919 – replaced in 1952), which serves as the tribal community center on the upper reaches of the Mattaponi River in King William County, the Upper Mattaponi numbers roughly 575 members. The tribe owns 32 acres of land nearby that it uses for festivals and pow-wows.

Early 17th century records show nine Indian towns along the Mattaponi River northwest of the present Mattaponi Reservation. A 1673 map indicates the largest concentration of Indians near the village of Passaunkack, traditional home of the Upper Mattaponi.

Through the 18th and 19th centuries the Upper Mattaponi were known as the Adamstown Band. An 1863 Civil War map showed the area as Indian Land. By the 1880s the Adamstown band had built their own school and in 1892 requested federal funds to help support education. In 1919, they built the one-room Sharon Indian School which was replaced in 1952 by a modern brick structure. Closed in 1965, the brick school is now on Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Buildings and serves as the tribal community center.

In the early 20th century, during a cultural revival among the Indian Tribes of the tidewater, the Adamstown Band officially incorporated and changed its name to the Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe. The Upper Mattaponi is also one of the six Virginia tribes seeking federal recognition through Congressional action.

Additional Virginia Indian Resources

Library of Virginia
www.lva.virginia.gov

Virginia Department of Historic Resources
www.dhr.virginia.gov

Virginia Indian Heritage Program
www.virginiahumanities.org/virginia-indian-program

Virginia Indian Heritage Trail Guide Online www.virginiahumanities.org/virginia-indian-program/virginia-indian-heritage-trail

Virginia Department of Education Teacher Resources on Virginia Indians
www.virginiaindians.pwnet.org

Beyond Jamestown: Virginia Indians Yesterday and Today Teacher Guide
www.virginiaindians.pwnet.org/resources/Beyond_Jamestown.pdf

Virginia's American Indian Historic Highway Markers
www.markerhistory.com/tag/american-indian-history

Bureau of Indian Affairs, United States Department of The Interior
www.bia.gov

American Indian Environmental Office, United States Environmental Protection Agency
www.epa.gov/tp

American Indian Studies at Virginia Tech
www.sociology.vt.edu/AINS

National Museum of the American Indian
www.nmai.si.edu/home

Colonial National Historical Park
A Study of Virginia Indians and Jamestown: The First Century
www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/jame1/moretti-langholtz/contents.htm